



# Weekly wrap up

Friday, September 9, 2005

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## Katrina, continued

It's a fluid situation, but DCS continues to perform nimbly, creatively, aggressively – and compassionately. Here's a summary of one of the latest updates that we've dispatched to the Governor's Office:

- DCS administrators are **checking regularly with local officials**, volunteers, law enforcement, state-government colleagues -- anyone who might know anything -- to find whether any kids have arrived.
- They **are looking particularly for unaccompanied children**. So far, we've had very few. DCS has already helped on 17-year-old who was sent here find his family in Shreveport. He departed promptly by Greyhound.
- DCS has set up a **special webpage** at [www.tn.state.us/youth](http://www.tn.state.us/youth). If we get unaccompanied kids who have been separated from their adult caregivers, we're posting digital pictures and detailed information on our site. So far, it's just 15-year-old Joe Mard Dominick, and we may reconnected him already. We're also sending the information to other websites that have already been established just for this purpose.
- If and when any planes arrive, DCS officials are standing by to greet them at the airport.
- In East Tennessee and in Knoxville, **hundreds are responding to requests to become foster parents**. We can expedite some of that application process, particularly if they have been foster parents before. But we need to remind potential applicants that it can take about 4 months for the background checks, foster-parent training and DCS home studies to take place. Our staff members have been on local media in Knoxville explaining this.
- Our financial people are working closely with the feds to iron out methods to get foster and adoptive families the federal assistance they would have received in, say, New Orleans.

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## Money Matters!

*Cimino's first 15 months on the DCS Express*

At the risk of sounding cliché, I can't believe it has been 15 months since my arrival at DCS. In April of 2004, I had just finished a career with the Metro Government of Nashville & Davidson County. I took a month off contemplating what next, when the phone rang and a position was presented to me at DCS, I thought to myself, "how difficult could it be, after all I had managed everything from operations, accounts payable, purchasing, budgeting, and general accounting for the past 32 years". As a matter of fact, it sounds like fun!

The first week on the job was a real eye opener. I walked in on a \$24 million revenue shortfall. I immediately began to question my sanity in having accepted the position. I felt as if I was on a runaway locomotive and could not get off. So, what next? It seemed to me that a good look at the landscape was in order. This meant in part that I would need to get to know the people who make the train run and identify the issues that they believe to be problematic for the department. I attended a lot of meetings and quickly made notes on three terms in which I would have to become knowledgeable: RMS, TCM, and IV-E.

What I also discovered that I had not anticipated was a love for the work we do. I love kids, after all I'm a grandfather and many of you know how much I love my three. But this was different. I think what stuck with me, was a comment the Commissioner made. She said, "Our kids just want someone to love them." I suddenly realized that this was something that money could not buy and that the only way to achieve this ultimate objective was to embrace a program concept called permanency. To help program achieve it's goal, I would have to intimately know the work and how resources could help drive the work.

So, back to my findings: What I found was a department in transition from business as usual to new school. The train was being driven by an engineer by the name of....well...you know who she is.

Because we were in a state of transition and the train was moving so fast, there were disconnects one of which was between program and fiscal. The fiscal mission was to live within resources and not exceed spending authority. Now this is an honorable mission, but it fails to connect on how we exist to support the department's mission.

Program, on the other hand, was clueless on finances. Most did not even know their operating budgets and had little knowledge of how fiscal relies upon programs as much as programs relies upon fiscal. Communications and accountability were certainly lacking.

Fortunately for me, staffing was not an issue. The job skills were in place, we simply needed to start communicating with each other and program. While I have autocratic moments, my staff knows that I typically prefer a team approach and often establish direction based on consensus.

Our efforts over the past year to improve communications and establish accountability have not gone without merit, for we have successfully closed FY05 in the black.

Conducting "Finance 101" regional action plans to address the issues, and improved reporting from the Budget Section and Revenue Maximization Section have paid off big time.

Initiatives to improve the accuracy of reporting through Random Moment Sampling (RMS) have worked.

In discovering relationships between case management and revenues, regions have collectively made significant improvement in Targeted Case Management (Medicaid) funding. Targeted Case Management Revenues were up by \$21,000,000 for FY05. This improvement is a result of more accurate reporting of what we do through Random Moment Sampling, improved TCM reporting, and increased face-to-face visits with our children.

Better understanding of the variables for maximizing eligibility of our children and services has also led to an increase in IV-E funding of \$6,741,737.

The revenue restorations and enhancements have enabled us to effectively resolve the 2005 revenue problem.

The work of our regions ranging from Case Managers, Resource Managers, Regional Administrators, CSA Executive Directors and Fiscal Support Staff to Central Office Personnel is to be commended. I recognize that the medicine was not always tasteful and that you may have preferred not to swallow, but you accepted it in stride and complacency is in remission.

The success we have enjoyed is not the end of a journey but rather the first fruits of a new beginning. The train cannot stop until someone, somewhere, loves every child.

In summary, we are a third of the way to what we can effectively call maximum revenues. My dad always said it took three years of consecutive earnings for a company to be able to say that they licked their problem and turned the corner.

The Budget and Revenue Maximization staff's look forward to our continued successes and challenge each of you to stay the course.

-- Joe Cimino

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## **HEART OF THE MATTER SEMINAR**

Children's Hope International, a member of the Inter-Agency Adoption Coalition of Middle Tennessee, is coordinating a day-long seminar on understanding the developmental challenges specific to adoptive children.

The seminar is scheduled for **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2005, 9 A.M. TO 4 P.M. AT THE BRENTWOOD HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST, 5120 FRANKLIN PIKE, NASHVILLE, TN.** Registration fees will be about \$25 per person.

This seminar is targeted to both families and adoption professionals and offers a full day of information and interactive breakout sessions to help understand the unique needs of adopted children and develop tools to help them. **It will be equally beneficial to families and professional of domestic and international adoption.**

According to Children's Hope International, this seminar has been sponsored by Children's Hope International branches in cities throughout the country, and it has been well attended with great reviews.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THEIR WEBSITE: [www.heartofthematterseminars.com](http://www.heartofthematterseminars.com) and Children's Hope International, Vonda Hunter, China Program Specialist, <[vonda@children'shopeint.org](mailto:vonda@children'shopeint.org)>

■ Carolyn Jones

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## CLT Rundown

Core Leadership Meeting  
Audrey Corder Presiding  
September 6

### **Commissioner's comments:**

The Commissioner is having a daily conference call at 9AM with the Governor since hurricane Katrina. She received calls from FEMA and TEMA this past weekend. This is likely to be a long-term emergency and shelters are a short-term solution. Tennessee has been declared a disaster area, which enables to state to receive far more federal funding. DCS employees have been contacting her about doing something for the hurricane victims. She stated that employees could help best by contributing money. Commissioner contacted CRI to waive foster home capacity, recruitment, expedited PATH training, fingerprinting, etc. DCS has waived the interstate compact on all children. DCS will discourage individual families placed in individual homes because of the liability it's better to place foster families in foster homes. We are expecting a large group of people to arrive in Nashville today. There have been 200-500 children enrolled in school in Shelby County and there is a need for counseling services. The Commissioner will be contacting the RA's at 10AM to discuss next steps. Forward all information concerning refugees to Commissioner.

### **Three Things CLT can do for the regions**

#### **Ken Steverson**

Help RA's to dig deeper into the Juvenile Justice data especially re-entry

Assign a Juvenile Justice person to each of the domain meetings

Develop personnel classification as Youth Specialist for residential setting

#### **Brenda Bell**

Coordination with Mental Health system to transition young adults for these services

Improve communication between regions and YDC's

Establish feedback loop system for COA

#### **Debra Valentine**

Provide a schematic of base problems of issues across state for RA's to review quarterly

Work directly with RA's to improve relationships with SIU and CPS staff

Discuss with RA's on contingency plans for the children we have in custody

Commissioner stated that licensure staff is valuable assets to community forums, etc.

#### **Rhonda Simpson**

Schedule individual meetings with RA's & their management teams to better understand data

Maintain data reliability – sample regions to look at this  
Working with research staff at Chapin Hall on better presentation of data

FSA's and CSA transition to OIS structure related to the new SACWIS system.

#### **Tom Riss**

Provide support for the regions as CSA's transition into the regions

Work with regions after the transition by gathering information from other experts that went through this change and share this information with the regions.

Vendors- in-service outcome based services – dialogue-  
how will we measure it. Work together as partners

Next week: Beth Kasch, Randal Lea, and William Haynes.

**Supervisory Training:**

Bonnie, Commissioner, Lane and Eric will be doing Supervisory training with all of the TC's in the state. The training is scheduled for September 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> and October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Rural Symposium:**

The rural symposium will be held at Paris Landing on August 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Judy Cole reviewed the draft agenda.

**Southwest Community Forum:**

Judy stated the forum went well. The TC's did most of the presentations and talked about the specific purposes they were involved in.

**State CQI**

Eric Henderson and Daryl lead a discussion on the P2E Domain CQI teams. A handout was presented to the CLT members with Team Leaders identified. Team Leaders were asked to meet after CLT to discuss meeting frequency, duration, team composition, and documentation process.

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"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." ~ Margaret Mead (1901 - 1978)

Thanks for sending that along, **Ann Brooks**